

# PEOPLE & THINGS By ATTICUS

DESPITE the fact that Parliament is still up, a number of our M.P.s wandered to their usual haunts to see the great assembly in Westminster Hall on the occasion of the XLVth Inter-Parliamentary Conference. M.P.s look forward to the long summer recess when they are free of the discipline of the Whips, but like the emancipated slaves of the South they miss their masters.

A young man stepped unobtrusively to the point where the Royal couple would stand on arrival to give the corps of photographers their correct setting. A few moments later there passed through the empty public lobby the Lord Chancellor with the Purse Bearer holding up his train, as if somehow they had got lost and were trying to find where the Great Show was to be held. Meanwhile the Guards band was giving us the works of Sir Edward Elgar, who is never absent on such occasions.

The early morning had been like November in its dark ill-humour, but suddenly the sun shone bravely and mingled its golden glory with that of the great crest-covered window and the uniform of the trumpeters stationed at its foot. It was a sight to stir the pulses of a chartered accountant, but unhappily the clouds grew jealous and dismissed the sun just before the Royal couple arrived.

## Troublesome Echo

Westminster Hall is a magnificent setting for such a gathering, but its acoustics are marred by an echo which blurs the sound of oratory. In fact, the only man I remember who defeated the Hall's defects was Sir Winston Churchill, when he was presented with the unfortunate portrait painted by Graham Sutherland. But even if we had not heard his words on that occasion the expression on his face would have been enough.

Yet, curiously, to me the most dramatic moment at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference had nothing to do with the speakers or the Assembly. A youngish



PAUL WILSON

The Dance of the Good and Evil Spirits, from the Bulgarian ballet at Festival Hall.

M.P. who had received no invitation, but had turned up to see what was going on, asked the policeman if he could join the gathering in the Hall. "There is no way of stopping you," said the policeman. "You are a Member of the House of Commons."

It was a declaration of Parliamentary independence worthy of the occasion.

## Deep Waters

IT is an old saying that racial equality is a philosophy put forward only by those nations that have no colour problem. I was reminded of it at a pleasant dinner party in London recently when the guests included an American Senator from the Deep South.

Although we should perhaps have avoided the subject, the conversation inevitably turned to the present troubles in Arkansas. The Senator listened most courteously to our arguments and even seemed to be impressed, but when we had put our case he answered in a single sentence, spoken patiently and with an attractive Southern drawl.

Without raising his voice, he

said simply and clearly: "If Ah saw mah daughter goin' out with a coloured man Ah would 'shoot him'."

Fortunately our host's face clearly indicated that the debate should not be continued, and we fell back upon the weather.

## Lampoonery

IT is encouraging that a new night club, which has just opened in London, is going to present a half-hour of satirical comment as part of its attraction. Politicians will be lampooned, society will be mocked and sophisticated music will encourage abstract thought. But I still think that oil shares would be a safer investment.

My favourite haunt for debunkery is still Spouters' Corner at Marble Arch which has recovered from its post-war doldrums and now has plenty of orators and lots of interruptions. On Sunday I attended London's open-air Parliament and heard some examples of Cockney surrealism.

For example:

Speaker: I welcome strangers.

Onlooker: Good! I'm a Chinese missile.

At another stand a robust orator was advising his hearers to build their own houses.

Onlooker: Did you do it?

Spouter: No.

Onlooker: Why not?

Speaker: Because my doctor said I should not lift anything heavier than a slice of bread.

Then there was the spouter who held up an American flag and proclaimed that he was the only one in the park with the flag of the United States. Asked why he had it, he replied: "I haven't the faintest idea."

## A Russian Candle

ONE subject is never stale—the life and politics of Russia. So I was pleased when a career diplomat, stationed in Moscow, came to my house recently and gave me an illuminating account of People and Things in the Soviet today. One change that may be significant is the growing respect or perhaps the growing fear of internal public opinion on the part of the rulers.

It is understandable that the Russian people no longer look to their newspapers for political enlightenment, since they rightly regard the Soviet Press as the automatic mouthpiece of the Government. Therefore it is encouraging that the public meeting is having a considerable revival. Needless to say this did not happen spontaneously. It was after Malenkov's deposition that Mr. Khrushchev decided there should be nationwide political gatherings where the leaders who kept office

could tell the people how the malefactors had sinned.

Mr. Khrushchev even went so far as to invite questions, although there is no record that any member of the audience asked him why he did not resign. "The truth is," said my informant, "that even the Russian people will not be content to live for ever under a Government which refuses to give some account of its actions."

"It is only a flickering candle," he said, "but at least the candle is lit."

## Muffled Masque

WHILE we are on the subject of life behind the Iron Curtain I felt it my duty to attend the opening night of the Bulgarian ballet at the Festival Hall.

The female form is not entirely a novelty in these days of frankness, but in Bulgaria it seems to be concealed beyond the needs of propriety. The nice young Bulgarian girls did not only their ankles but even their wrists. The nuances of the human form are surely essential to ballet. As for the men, they were a vigorous lot although stamping on the floor loses its appeal after a time.

Nor did the musicians on the stage take us to Elysian heights. There was a curious Scottish-Moorish quality about the music. But there were lots of vitality, and I have no doubt that the fault was in myself, and not in the stars that had come all the way from Bulgaria to shine upon us.

## Harmony and Discord

IT is always good to see youth given its chance and, therefore, I was delighted to learn that Alexander Gibson, in his late twenties, has been appointed Musical Director of Sadler's Wells Opera. He recently made the pilgrimage to Bayreuth and, understandably, was not impressed by the complete obliteration of the conductor from the view of the audience.

Yet Mr. Gibson's début at Sadler's Wells on September 24 will not be without its difficulties. The chorus has gone on strike for more pay and the dispute may not be settled in time.

The opera chosen for the opening of the Sadler's Wells Season was "Samson and Delilah" but unfortunately this calls for an enlarged chorus. Instead Mr. Gibson will conduct Act II of "Samson and Delilah" and the last act of "La Bohème." His associate conductor, Mr. Cundell, plans to take charge of the baton for one act of "Cosi fan Tutte." It is too bad that there should be discord in the hall of harmony, but not even the arts can escape the rising cost of staying alive.

It has been said that every man of imagination has longed to command an army in the field or conduct an orchestra. I predict that Mr. Gibson will go far—perhaps even to the Metropolitan in New York.

## People and Words

It's a good investment in democracy to pay Parliamentarians well. If I am getting six times as much as my British counterpart they are being underpaid—because at \$22,500 a year I don't think I'm being overpaid.

—SENATOR ESTES KEF-AUVER.

'I'm just an Angry Middle-aged Woman now.

—MISS ETHEL MANNIN.

A woman diplomat can always fall back on her intuition and charm—and sometimes that can do more than the shrewdness of a man!

—MISS MARIA PERDOMA, Consul-General for the Dominican Republic.

Schools are aiming far too much at teaching pupils the content of other men's minds, and too little at training them to discover the capacity of their own.

—MR. R. R. HANCOCK, President of the Incorporated Society of Headmasters